

DIGITAL AMPUTATIONS UNDER COCAINE.

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I WISH to call attention to a very simple method of employing cocaine in cases, where, from injury to the fingers, amputation is found to be a necessity.

The injuries which more particularly have come under my observation are such as have been caused by stamping machines or circular saws, and include a series of operations varying from the amputation of a part of the last phalanx to the greater part of an entire finger or thumb, as the case may have been.

The Method. On the entrance of the patient and the exposure of the injured member, the wound is thoroughly saturated with a 4% solution of the hydrochlorate of cocaine before any examination is made, and then, after waiting a few minutes for absorption to take place, one can examine and probe the wound with entire satisfaction, as the patient makes no resistance, because he suffers no pain.

The flaps may then be cut, following each considerable incision with a few drops of the cocaine solution, and also using it occasionally to wet the entire denuded part, ligatures may be applied, and the bone sawed as necessity may demand.

The wound is now ready to be closed and, after thoroughly irrigating it with antiseptic solution and providing for proper drainage, sutures are applied and the wound dressed according to the principles of antiseptic surgery.

The method is simply one of saturating the wound with the cocaine solution—the cocaine is not injected. Not that there is any objection to such a procedure, but simply because of the lack of necessity—anæsthesia being sufficient without the use of the hypodermatic needle.

The question has been asked, does the cocaine interfere with primary union? No; in the cases under observation no bad effects have resulted from this method, either on the constitution of the patient or the healing of the wound. I have also used cocaine somewhat extensively and in the same way with very happy results, in wounds of the scalp and face, and in allaying the pain of those very annoying "little things" in the way of injuries which go so far toward making minor surgery disagreeable both to the patient and surgeon, and yet are of themselves not dangerous to life.